

Jeff Cormier, President  
Joe Comeaux, Treasurer

Officers and Directors

Barry Humphus, Editor, Bubba Cheramie  
George Kuffel, John Marcon, Chuck Middleton

**Mentoring Program** - If you have a project, a problem in any woodworking area, these members have volunteered to help. Give them a call. Jeff Cormier: 582-3278; George Kuffel: 478-2707; John Marcon: 478-0646; Chuck Middleton: 625-3134; Gary Rock: 433-1679; Eltee Thibodeaux: 436-1997; Dick Truth: 583-2683. Each has years of experience and knowledge.

### March Meeting Highlights

Our meeting at the PPG Porter Hall for the delayed annual BBQ was as always great with lots of terrific food, Show and Tell and a good time.

John L. Fontenot asked for volunteers for the Boy Scouts at their Camp Edgewood facility just north of Ragley on Hwy 171 in late June. What he requested is that one of our turners bring a small lathe up there for demonstrations. Ray Kebodeaux suggested that he might do a demonstration of flint knapping. for merit badge work bt the Scouts. If others are interested in assisting the good cause, please contact John Fontenot at 433-2276.

Jeff Cormier showed off one of his little "scrap" tables, this one of pine with mortise and tendon jointery and tapered legs. The item was for our raffle this month.

Pie Sonnier, our host this month, brought a "new" 1965 Ford Mustang. Pie's vehicles are very special and this one was constructed with cherry, maple, walnut, ebony and bass wood.

J. W. Anderson showed us a great power-carved cypress bread bowl. J.W. said he used the Lancelot system to do the work. Mr. Thibodeaux brought us a pretty scroll work box from a pattern and a scroll work cross. Lee Frazier also brought us a scroll work cross made of white oak and was of a Victorian Brazil design. Lee has been getting back to scroll work after a several year absence.

John Perry brought a turkey call while Ray Kebodeaux had a lovely letter opener made of "iron" wood, pecan and with a bamboo blade along with hop horn bean wood.

Larry Eagle brought one of his unusual, and this time large, wood art pieces. Originally, it was used as a stand for a large pottery item but as typical of Larry's work, this piece stood by itself. The original work, "Iron and Table" would have been great to see. The legs were made of old truck springs while the "table" was from a recovered pine beam., finished with multiple coats of poly.

Gary Rock brought us a bowl o magnolia plus sweet cherry kalidiscscope. Jimmy Everett's cork screw willow canes were on display. Chuck middleton gave away lots of glass cigar tubes as well.

Coming Up . . . Saturday, April 11 at 9:00 a.m. at the Sulphur shop of Pie Sonnier. Please joins us for Show and Tell, woodworking wisdom and advise plus our wonderful coffee.

### Review: Chestmate Dovetail Jig

For most woodworkers one of the most important parts of their work is the joinery. This means that most of us are always looking for tricks and tools to make their favorite joints easier. Here's where the ChestMate Dovetail Jig from Prazi USA comes in. The benefit of this jig is its versatility: the number and size of the tails is variable and there is no limit to the stock width.

The first thing that you will notice is that the ChestMate does not look like other dovetail jigs on the market. The claim to (hoped-for) fame of this particular dovetail jig is that it can be used with stock of any width. For stock thickness, it can accommodate one-half inch to one-inch boards. Choose your own stock, and choose your own dovetail arrangements, as well. You can make the joint placements symmetrical or asymmetrical as you wish, or you can create a repeating pattern of dovetail cuts with this simple jig. That is something that only the most expensive jigs can accommodate.

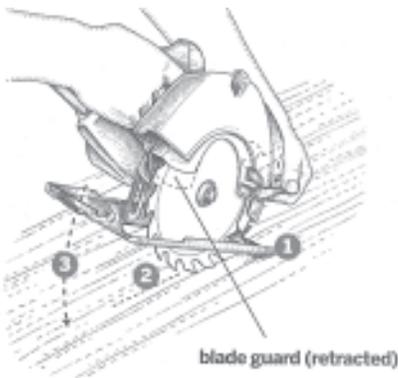
For each project, you first need to create a unique index board, really just a length of scrap wood equal to the width of the stock being dovetailed. You cut shallow kerfs in this board to register the side-to-side placement of the jig and thus the number and placement of the tails.

The main issue with the jig was that, at each end of the stock, it created half-tails rather than the more traditional and aesthetically pleasing half-pins. That said, half-pins are doable if you alter the normal setup and add extra support at each end of the stock. Another option is to start with extra wide stock and, after the joint is cut, trim the edges to make the half-pins. The Chestmate handles stock from 1/2 in. to 1 in. thick. The standard model cuts 14-degree through-dovetails, but a new 7-degree template is available as an accessory.

The instructions also claim that "when backed up properly and with the use of sharp cutter bits, the pins and tails will be splinter-free." Other than that, it works in conjunction with your router very similarly to most other dovetail jigs, as the short and clear instructions explain. (Which means you should actually read them! I particularly appreciated the part on page 5 which notes that you should "wait until it stops" before removing your router after cutting the tails.) The ChestMate sells for about \$120 from many woodworking sources. You can find out more about it at <http://www.praziusa.com/chestmate.html>. *Barry Humphus*

## Plunge Cuts

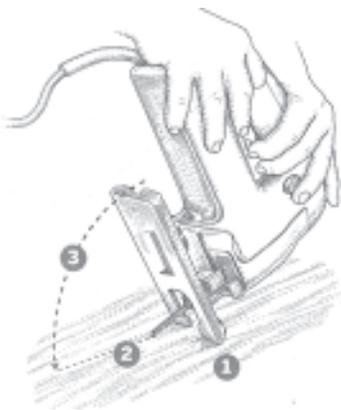
Knowing how to plunge cut comes in very handy. If you are cutting a hole in a counter top for a sink, taking out some damaged flooring or even putting in that skylight you've been wanting, the plunge cut is a good skill to have. Doing a plunge cut means that you don't have to take the time to drill a pilot hole or start from the edge of the material. Jigsaws are best for material no more than 3/4" thick while circular saws are good for thicker material such as the framing for a sub-floor or roof. The basic technique is about the same for both tools: make sure you use a sharp blade and hold the saw with both hands.



For circular saws, adjust your blade to cut no more than 3/8" deeper than the thickness of the material through which you are cutting. Hold the saw firmly with both hands and rest the front edge of the base plate against the wood, well away from any edge, corners or ends that you don't want to cut. The

reason is that the saw cut will move backward as the blade plunges into the material and completely lowered. Tilt the tool up so that the blade is 1 to 2 inches above the work.

Next, retract the blade guard by pushing down on its front tab or lever with the thumb of your lead hand. Then turn on the saw and gradually lower the spinning blade straight into the material as you maintain a firm pressure on the front of the base plate.



When the base plate is resting against the wood, release the blade guard lever and push the saw to the end of your cut. If you are using a jigsaw and it has an orbital setting, turn it off. If the saw has a scroll feature, be certain to lock it so the head

does not rotate. Make sure you are using an appropriate blade for wood.

Like the circular saw, tip the saw forward on its base plate. Hold the blade above the surface of the wood and in line with your cut line. Turn on the saw and slowly pivot the base plate down. Begin to apply light pressure and be patient. The blade will scrape at first but will gradually dig through the wood as the blade teeth bite into the wood. When the blade cuts through the material, you lower the base plate flat against

the surface. At that point, push the saw forward through to the end of your cut. *Barry Humphus.*

## Table Saw Splitter

Adding a splitter to a new table saw zero clearance throat insert is an excellent safety practice. Once installed, neglecting it requires a conscious effort, so the odds are that it will see everyday, real-life use.

With very few exceptions, the splitters that come with most table saws are lousy. They get in the way and often as not, the woodworker simply removes them and never uses one again. But without one, you run the very high risk of kickback and damage to the work piece and worse, damage to you. The splitter has an important function: to keep either piece of board from moving to the back of the blade. If it does catch the back of the blade, it can be hurtled forward at speeds more than 200 mph — one ugly form of kickback.

I've found, though, that the usually recommended procedure of extending the kerf behind the blade and gluing in a wooden tongue is hard to pull off without introducing minuscule errors. The slightest error will result in a device that snags the work piece. The method below solves those problems. Raise the saw blade through a new zero clearance plate insert. Then place the insert against a fence on a drill-press table. Align things by lowering a drill bit of a diameter that is equal to the blade thickness (usually 1/8 in.) into the kerf. When the bit is centered in the kerf, lock the fence, change to a twist drill bit 1/32 in. smaller, switch on the drill press and bore a hole near the out-feed end of the kerf. Now push that same bit into the hole, shank up, along with a dab of cyanoacrylate (so-called Super glue) glue. The twist drill bit will now serve as the splitter pin. It will be aligned perfectly with the saw kerf and should have about 1/64 in. of clearance on each side.

I have used many push sticks and quite a few of them have been dinged, or worse. Every ding equals one finger that might have been scarred or lost.

That is a way of saying, use push sticks. But all push sticks are not safe. I frankly think that one of the most common push sticks is also the most unsafe. They are about 8 inches long, an inch wide at most and just unsafe. I prefer the Craftsman Guide Master (Sears part 932190). It is hefty, keeps your soft parts well away from blades and includes scales, a center finder, blade height indicator and more. *Barry Humphus.*

## Last Notice for Renewal

One of the things you've got to do to continue with this Newsletter is renew your membership in the Lake Charles Woodworkers Club. Do this by sending your membership check to our wonderful new treasurer for \$20 to Joe Comeaux. Make your check payable to LCWWC and mail it to Joe Comeaux, 1675 Campfire Road, Lake Charles, LA 70611.

## Table Saw Accessories

Table saws are often the central tool in many woodworking shops, and a long list of accessories make these versatile tools even more useful, and safer, than they already are. What counts in a good accessory are that the accessory must fit your saw properly; that it is sturdy; and that it is accurate and easy to install with readily available tools and skills.

Guiding work on the rip and crosscuts are the two most frequent needs with a table saw. Consequently, rip fences and miter gauges are the typically the first table saw accessories that are added to the woodworker's arsenal. What comes as standard on many table saws can be very disappointing. Fortunately, a number of manufacturers make aftermarket alternatives that will significantly improve the performance and accuracy of nearly any table saw.

Heavy fences — like those made by Delta (Biesemeyer) and others — are less likely to flex under load and stay parallel to the blade. Models that do not require a locking rail at the back of the saw also make it easier to add an out-feed table.

There are a number of miter-gauge options that have more precise settings and more flexibility than the standard-issue gauge that comes with many saws. Some can be calibrated for precise joint-making. Tenoning jigs and angle jigs that ride in the saw's miter-gauge slot are useful for cutting a variety of joints. A micro-adjust feature on some models makes it easier to dial in very precise settings.

Zero-clearance throat plates made from phenolic resin, wood or a similarly stiff material help to prevent tear-out in splintery materials like hardwood veneer plywood or melamine. Some versions have replaceable inserts that share a common frame.

Most blade guards that come with machines are one piece that includes the guard and splitter — a very poor design from the point of view of usability. So what you often end up doing is removing the entire mechanism. Aftermarket blade guards are generally better than original equipment, which is why woodworkers remove these from their saws to improve visibility of the blade. Telescoping models may contain a dust collection hose.

Feather-boards that fit in the miter-gauge slot or are held in place with an integral magnet keep stock snugly against the fence for straighter and safer cuts. Splitters reduce the risk of kickback by keeping stock away from the leading edge of the saw blade. Aftermarket splitters can be added directly to the table insert or installed on a bracket; several offer a quick release function to make removal easier.

Table saws are typically used for two functions - cross-cutting and ripping. Cross-cutting is slicing a board across its width and across the grain of the wood. Ripping is cutting a board lengthwise, with the grain. A riving knife prevents a phenomenon known as kickback. This occurs when the wood

is caught by the rear edge of the table saw blade, lifted off the table and propelled backwards toward the operator.

Two circumstances usually cause kickback: The closure of the kerf behind the blade due to the relief of stresses in the wood as it is cut, or a binding of the wood between the blade and a vertical fence used to guide the wood into the blade during the ripping operation.

Table saws are sometimes equipped with some kind of "splitter", a stationary blade of metal or plastic that holds the kerf open behind the blade. The safety function of a riving knife is the same as a splitter - it prevents the slot cut into kerf from closing behind the blade on a rip, or allowing the stock that may bind between the blade and fence from getting caught by the teeth on the back of the blade

A riving knife differs from a simple splitter in some important ways:

- \* It doesn't need to be removed from the saw when cross-cutting or doing a blind (non-through) cut as it doesn't extend above the top of the saw blade. If it isn't removed, the operator can't forget to put it back on.

- \* It sits closer to the back edge of the blade, making it much more effective — less space for the stock to shift into the path of the blade

- \* It provides some additional protection for the operator - blocking contact to the back edge of the blade - in those situations where the stock is being pulled from the outfeed side of the saw

- \* It's independent of (and won't interfere with) other blade guards and dust collectors

The way it achieves all of this is that is mounted on the same mechanism that mounts the blade, allowing it to move with the saw blade as it's raised, lowered and tilted. To work properly, the knife should be just slightly less than the width of the blade, and is just slightly shorter than the blade.

Unfortunately, there is virtually no way to retro-fit a riving knife to an older table saw with few exceptions. Some of the Bosch portable (newer than 2004) to have this capability, but no others to my knowledge do. *Barry Humphus.*

